

*100-115-116
Collection*

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

PROVINCIAL SYNOD OF CANADA,

IN

Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal,

By JOHN, LORD BISHOP OF FREDERICTON,

ON SEPTEMBER 12TH, 1877.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF MEMBERS OF THE PROVINCIAL SYNOD.



Montreal:

LOVELL PRINTING AND PUBLISHING COMPANY.

1877.

A SERMON

PROVINCIAL STAFF OF CANADA

1877
(56)

A SERMON.

Psalm xlviii. v. 12, 13, 14. Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever.

Those who are as old as I am, may remember that once it was taken for granted, that the whole strength of the Church lay in its being an Established Church; a Church firmly bound to the State by golden fetters, of which St. Paul and St. Peter knew nothing.

In those halcyon days, there were occasional meetings on behalf of the society (as it was called) scantily attended. A safe, moderate and wealthy parson was usually invited to preach, and discoursed on the security of the Church of England, and the evils of dissent. At a small assemblage afterwards held, after a few well turned compliments to each other, and a brief glance at foreign lands, which no one had any intention of visiting, and of which few knew anything, the meeting separated in the full spirit of Mons. de Talleyrand's direction, "above all, sir, no zeal." It was taken for granted that Christianity and the Establishment were synonymous terms. One can scarcely think it possible, that in one man's lifetime the aspect of things in the Church should have so completely changed. Hundreds of parishes in those days had only one service on Sunday; and thousands found the church doors closed against them all the week. It seemed that man was made to worship his Creator one day in seven, more than this would be fatal to the Protestant religion.

Those were days in which I can well remember, as a boy, the lordly faculty pews, in which there was abundance of room for the owners, but none for the poor, and in which the wealthy proprietors, if anything were too plain spoken in the sermon, stirred their fires, and rendered the offensive words inaudible. The old churches lingered on in calm decay, but no one understood their architecture, and ordinary Christians could see no difference between the style of one age and the style of another.

There were no hymnals in those days—we all rejoiced, or submitted to the feeble rhymes of Brady and of Tate, in supposed imitation of the genius of David.

The Christian year had not then been born. Hymnology was consigned to a few enthusiasts. Liturgical studies formed no part of a clergyman's reading. The Prayer-book was pronounced excellent, and many a panegyric uttered on our admirable Liturgy; but the sources of its grandeur were not investigated, its revisions were unknown, no list existed of the antiquity of its collects, and no history of the discussions at the Savoy Conference set forth in full, for the benefit of all time, the temper and the desires of our opponents, and the full and explicit answers to all exceptions by those most learned champions of our Church, Saunderson, Pearson, Walton, Sparrow and Gunning. How could our Prayer-book be understood, or really valued, when its Communion office was dethroned from its proper place in Christian worship, when, instead of meeting, like the Apostolic Christians, at an early hour to break bread every Lord's day, and to offer the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise, Holy Communion was read, I can hardly say celebrated, three or four times, and received sometimes once a year?

At this particular term of our history, when paralysis of spiritual life and motion seemed the pressing danger,

a few earnest and good men, hearing the mutterings of a rising storm against the Church, set themselves seriously to investigate the whole history of her constitution. They asked, whether Establishment was the real foundation on which she rested? Had her Prayer-book no link with the past? Were her orders traceable to apostolic times? Had her bishops and clergy any authority independent of what the State could confer? Could the State, consistently with the enactments of Parliament itself, and the declarations of our monarchs, dictate to the church what our doctrines and our ritual should be, irrespective of the deliberations of Convocation? These inquiries were, it must be remembered, made by men unversed in architectural knowledge, who certainly were not Ritualists. But the notion of any powers wholly spiritual, and independent of the state, appeared so novel and so foreign to men's minds, that men lashed themselves into fury at the thought. It would not be saying too much to describe them, like their predecessors, throwing dust into the air, and crying out, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live."

It is now possible to take a calmer view of the situation. After all this extraordinary tumult, we have lived to find men's minds no longer agitated by practices which now appear perfectly innocuous. Ancient pews have been swept away, yet few murmur. Ancient churches are restored to somewhat of their pristine glory, and every one rejoices. Long processions of surpliced priests are formed, even with Archbishops and Bishops at their head, to consecrate, or to celebrate the anniversary of consecrations; thousands of earnest laymen await the entrance of the white-robed choir into St. Paul's Cathedral and join heartily in the plain song of the church; fonts are restored to their original use and place, and altars, duly

vested, are substituted for mean kitchen tables, and the church has (by God's blessing) achieved a second reformation. No longer offering to God the meanest and the worst, "the blind and the lame," she humbly and reverently presents to His glory the best, the costliest of all His gifts to her.

We have also lived to see a still more glorious reform, for the Church has fulfilled her great Master's charge, and has been mindful of her duty ; extending herself into all lands, giving to independent states, and widespread colonies, what statesmen sullenly denied her ; linking together people of all lands in the fellowship of christian love, and furnishing for an example to mankind, not the silken courtliness of purple ease, but the self-sacrificing labours of priests, and laymen, and sisterhoods, and the courted martyrdom of a primitive bishop. Have we then lost anything by the changes ? Nay, are we not infinite gainers ? Have we not been taught no longer to lean on the promises of statesmen, but on the strong arm of the present Saviour standing on the right hand of God to succour us ? And if I read the mystical gospel history aright, that waves and storms will ever beat upon the church ship, until He rises from His throne, omnipotent to save, we have no cause to be dismayed by present dangers, more than by the past. "O passi graviores, dabit Deus his quoque finem." And thus after a mighty peril and a miraculous deliverance, the holy writer of this Psalm, "with all the pride and affection of a patriot," with a poet's and a painter's eye, bids the citizens of Zion go forth. "Mark well her bulwarks," which God has founded, which the foe has threatened, but could not destroy ; consider one by one the glory of her sacred shrines, and tell to future generations that your confidence was not misplaced ; hand down to coming ages your great Catholic heritage whole, undefiled, unmutilated, unimpaired, for

it is Jesus the Saviour who has commanded you to keep the bulwarks of His Church for Him.

In venturing to offer some advice in regard to our *present dangers*, and the consolations which we may gather from the Divine Word, and from past history and experience, I would say they all point to the one great source of hope, "Hold thee still in the Lord, and abide patiently upon Him"; "O tarry thou the Lord's leisure; be strong and He shall comfort thine heart." And I make this one observation at the outset, that when the church ship seemed in greatest peril, the Master took no heed of the winds and waves without, He slept in godlike security. The only danger He referred to was the Apostles' want of faith, and He said, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" From which we learn this great lesson, that our chief dangers come from within ourselves, not from without.

Bear with me while I briefly point out some of these dangers. May we not say that *want of holiness* is certainly the first? As a body, the clergy and laity of our Church may perhaps compare favorably with some other Christians, but how far has the spirit of the age insensibly led us all away from the Apostolic standard? Are we the Epistles of Christ, known and read of all men? Are we not only moderate, honest and respectable, but unworldly, unselfish, and, so to speak, enamoured of our duties? In the work of our holy calling, have we all the same untiring energy which the merchant, the lawyer, and the politician display in their several pursuits? Do our lives reflect the image of our prayers? Are we often in communion with God? Do love and purity, meekness and uncompromising fidelity shine in all our ways, or is there anything of mere professional talk to be heard among us? Do we busy ourselves chiefly with the fussy, superficial activities of the religious

world, as if committee meetings, and the formation of new societies would atone for the absence of that holy heart without which no man shall see the Lord? Whilst we glory in our freedom from some special errors, peculiarly repulsive to us, and manifestly unpopular, is sin under some other form, disguised as an angel of light, Pharisaical pride, contempt of others and neglect of duty, the root of bitterness that springs up unseen, and mars the reality of our Christian life? For, of all men living, the clergyman has most to dread that spirit which proudly cries in the temple of God: "I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, nor even as this Papist, nor even as this Puritan.

A want of sound knowledge is another of our dangers. In the present dearth of candidates for the ministry arising from various causes, we have too much reason to fear that unprepared and unsatisfactory men will seek to rush into the ministry, not in the spirit of St. Chrysostom's great treatise on the Priesthood; not in the spirit of the Apostle who spent three years in Arabia, meditating on the sacred oracles, before he began to teach: not agreeably to the direction: "Give thyself to reading, to meditation, to prayer," but in the temper of a man who looks on fluency of speech as the sum and substance of the teaching power of the ministry, instead of being (as it is) a most dangerous gift.

For mere fluency, unchecked, is almost sure to lead to want of preparation. Words poured forth at random neither spring from thought, nor suggest thought, and while the empty hearer marvels, the thoughtful turn away in disgust.

"Nil sine labore," said a wise heathen. "Every man according to his labour," said an inspired Apostle. Why should we expect to acquire an adequate knowledge of our profession with less labour than other men? Why should a knowledge of French, German or Spanish be demanded

in certain lines of business, while it is supposed that we cannot find time, or will not expend toil in understanding the gospel in the two languages in which the Holy Ghost appointed his servants to preach to mankind? The terms of general salvation are one thing, the preparation for the ministry is another. As a reader, who will allow no man to read in the church but himself, ought to read better, certainly not worse than his hearers, so an expounder of the sacred word should not be ignorant of the idioms and terms of the language which he professes to explain to the flock. And to say nothing of the gross mistakes into which both preachers and hearers sometimes fall from ignorance of all but the authorized version, it may happen that questions of doctrine are seriously affected by a mistranslation, in which no true distinction is made between the present, the aorist and the perfect tenses, or in which ignorance of a Hebrew idiom has been made the subject of an idle cavil. One thing I take to be certain, that more labour ought to be bestowed on the acquisition of Scriptural knowledge, and that in this discerning and inquisitive age, unless bishops, priests and laymen see the necessity of gradually raising the standard of knowledge in candidates for the ministry, (and bishops alone cannot enforce this) great danger will accrue to the extension and usefulness of our Church. Nor is the want of scriptural knowledge the only evil from which our clergy and laity suffer. In the preface to our Ordination service, our Prayer-book teaches us that we are an historical church. "Antient authors," that is the writings of the Christian Fathers, are referred to as sufficient to show, together with the canonical Scriptures, that our church government is of divine institution. If it be so, it should be revered accordingly. If this reference to antiquity be applied further to the ordinances and ritual of our church, it would not only supply us with a

sound and judicious guide on many vexed questions, but it would so instruct the younger clergy and the less informed among our laity, that we should have fewer dissensions among us, and scarcely any would be found banded in opposition to the canonical authority of their bishops, or clamouring for another reform of the Prayer-book, so as to sweep away all distinctive doctrine from it, doctrine which one may safely say is built on the writings and practice of the apostles and prophets, as well as on the continuous witness of the Holy Catholic Church. Such proceedings have their root (it seems to me) in ignorance. When the priests lips keep knowledge, and freely dispense it, they may be removed.

But I pass on to speak of one other danger, one of our greatest, *want of love*. When we remember how clearly an Apostle has told us that neither eloquence, nor knowledge of gospel mysteries, nor a large measure of faith, nor the sacrifice of our substance, nor the yielding our bodies to the flame will avail anything without love, we may tremblingly ask what is to be the end? Fierce fires of bitterness surround us, fanned by the inconsiderate zeal of eager partizans. Every one who cannot see eye to eye with ourselves is supposed to be against us, not remembering that he that is not against us may be on our part. What must be the evils of intolerance, when toleration is but the smallest part of love? To agree to differ may be necessary, when the disputes are irreconcilable; but we ought to strive for a settlement of them as long as it is possible, without sacrifice of Christian principle. **And it is possible to place things indifferent in the rank of principles, and to push what we call principles, to the destruction of love.**

We have long been accustomed to certain differences both of interpretation of doctrine and of ritual, and if the Articles

or rubrics were enlarged, and made much more stringent in one direction than they are at present, though you might bind men by "burdens, grievous to be borne," you could not bind the freedom of the human mind, which finds a way out of every prison. The power of truth is stronger than the force of law. I am well aware that in addressing you in cathedrâ, I do not speak *ex cathedrâ*: yet shall I not withhold my opinion that in an evil hour for the Church of England, it was determined to stamp out one of the serious and earnest parties in our church. Rites in public worship, all men, pagan or christian, must have, and have always had. Our rites are directed by the rubrics of our Prayer-book, which is, and has been in times past, constantly neglected in its plainest expressions, to the detriment of reverence and to the promotion of that most fatal notion, that worship consists in seeing and hearing a preacher. Attention to due ritual, judiciously conducted, is no more than an endeavor to discover the most suitable way of doing honor to the presence of Almighty God. This Presence promised to be in the midst of us, in our prayers, our praises, in the baptism of our infants, and the celebration of our Holy Eucharist, we come to worship. It cannot, therefore, be an unfit subject of inquiry, nor need it disturb any christian mind, that there should be inquiry, with what ritual, what postures of holy devotion, what significant and solemn symbols of our faith, we may most humbly, and most agreeably to the mind of Christ, adore our Incarnate God. Our church has provided us with an answer to such questions in part—only in part, because no rubrics are sufficient to provide for all emergencies, and to govern this whole question. Seeing then it must be admitted that this great subject has received scant consideration in times past, and that the entire neglect of ritual has led many clergy and many

congregations into extreme and most lamentable irreverence, no breach of Christian love need to be made between those who, from long disuse, are slow to perceive any need of change, and those who, from keen perception of the evils of disuse, have set themselves (it may be thought not always discreetly) to reform what is amiss, according to the rules which they have promised to obey. It is the character of all reforms to elicit differences of thought and action, and ritual is simply no exception to the general rule. This matter should, in my view, be dealt tenderly with on both sides. If those who call themselves Evangelical—a title I should refuse to accord to them in such a way as to exclude others from faithfully preaching the gospel of Christ—if those who are called, or call themselves High Churchmen, and those who suppose themselves to be men of broader sympathies than their brethren, can work together in the same church for the common weal, in Synods, in Conferences, in Congresses, at Consecrations, and Holy Communions, why should the Ritualist be excluded? Why should he have a special scourge invented for his peculiar benefit, called by one of the many ironies of life fatherly correction? I do not undertake to justify any rude and uncharitable expressions used in haste and anger towards those whose age, station and authority in the church demand respect, but I make great allowance for the feelings of men, who, thoroughly in earnest themselves, devoted to hard and often ill-paid work, seek to attract and to christianize rude and half-heathen populations, and having succeeded in this arduous task, and made up congregations of most unpromising materials, who are devoutly attached to their pastors, and delight in a service in which they can all join, find themselves prosecuted by people who send hired spies to watch, not to worship, in their churches, and are brought under the lash of a law which scarcely any of the

bishops themselves perfectly obey, and notoriously, those bishops who put the law in operation obey it the least. It has been the wisdom and the glory of the Church of England, that it is a tolerant church. This spirit has been deemed unfaithful by those who would bind men to a hard and fast line, and, by the severest penalties, prohibit any man from passing it. But the same tolerant spirit has attracted far more than it repelled. In matters of faith the church is more stringent, knowing, from history, the subtlety of unbelief; in matters of ritual, she allows for diversities of feeling and expression. This liberty is accorded to Every Body in the church save one. Men of every shade of opinion, and of practice, are tolerated, are welcomed, are rewarded, but this one Body which numbers in its ranks some of the most holy and self-denying of our priests, some of the most learned of our liturgists, some of the most liberal, loyal and spiritual of our laymen, is denounced. The law "with lime twigs set to catch their winged souls," only seems framed to crush them, or to drive them (if possible) into the arms of another Communion to which they most properly refuse to go. May not they, without any breach of charity, exclaim to their prosecutors, "Yet none of you keepeth the law." I have a strong conviction that if a wholly different course had been pursued, if the trusted leaders of the Ritualists, priests and laymen, had been summoned to meet the Bishops in friendly conference, after solemn prayer for the gentle wisdom of the Holy Ghost, with Holy Communion, and these men had been asked to state their reasons, and their difficulties, and their wishes, and the Bishops had patiently heard all, and as patiently replied, and that then both parties had considered how practically to meet the difficulty, and to keep on friendly terms, I feel very hopeful that "God would have revealed even this unto us," and a way would have been found for the

tolerance of some things deemed by them essential, and the abandonment of others as idiosyncrasies, or eccentricities of hasty, impatient minds.

And if some customs had been tolerated, which are held up to public odium, who would have been the losers? *Not the Church*, which would have been commended for its fatherly wisdom, and the increase of its love; *not the Bishops*, who would have been saved all their law suits, and useless expenses, and all the distrust and fear with which many now regard them, who are their natural friends, and ought to love them; *not the Evangelical body*, who would have been saved all the hard speeches and reprisals of those who think they are injured by them; *not the Broad Churchmen*, who profess to look on such proceedings from so lofty an eminence, that they can afford to treat them with contempt; *not the State*, which has gained no strength, and won no loyal regard by prosecution. No! the devil and his angels are the only beings who have gained anything, for he who gnashes his teeth with rage, when he sees us all loving and united, now laughs with fiendish joy when he beholds us torn and bleeding with continual dissension. The lesson which I draw from a long, anxious and attentive consideration of these grave dangers, of which no one can see the end, is not to follow the example set us by an established Church in one that is not established, at all events, not established in the same sense. In our condition, to attempt to force every man into the same narrow groove, according to decisions which have been declared by one of the highest legal authorities, to appear even to legal minds, inconsistent with each other, and which not one Bishop in Canada has yet entirely complied with, would be little less than an act of insanity, and it would be better, it appears to me, to wait till men's minds are more calm, and can look on matters in dispute with more knowledge, toleration and judgment.

Having said so much on our dangers, there is little time to speak on the consolations which God mercifully allows us in this distracted condition of things at home. Surely if we read history aright, there have been worse times than these, times when the flames of persecution carried off the bravest and the best ; times, when the world "awoke to find itself Arian" ; times, when corruption filled the ranks of the clergy ; times, when a monarch was murdered and the liturgy proscribed ; times, when the church seemed paralysed. We live amidst happier omens, in the liberty of an extending and progressive church, and unless we forsake God, God will not forsake us.

To me, the greatest consolation is my unalterable conviction, that this is God's Church which I serve. This Church I loved as a boy, I revered as a priest, and have now grown grey in her service as a bishop. The records of history, the experience of her daily teaching, the manifest blessing of God in her missionary work, at home and abroad, bring home this conviction to my heart. Only, amidst all differences, in the midst of all dangers, if Jesus our Saviour loved His own to the end, if our Lord loves us in spite of our manifold sins and defects, we may surely love one another. That very word *Synod* is a word that pleads for love. It belongs to "men of the way," as the primitive Christians were called. And the preposition before the word, signifies that we walk together in this way, that is, in truth and in love. Surely our Prayer-book presents more points of agreement than of difference. We meet this day to enjoy the fellowship of Christ's unspeakable gift. Shall not this soften our prejudices, and the savour of that blessed name diffuse itself like the dew that from the top of snow-crowned Hermon was wafted to the lowlier hill of Zion, like the sacred ointment which flows over the robe of the priest in all the rich graces of God's most Holy Spirit.

O my brethren, if "the time will come when three words uttered in charity and meekness shall receive a more blessed reward than those thousand volumes written with disdainful sharpness of wit," be mindful of the loving patriarch's precept: "See that ye fall not out by the way." Bishops, priests and laymen, have you not the strongest bonds of charity that can bind souls together for time and eternity? This "consolation in Christ, this fellowship of the Spirit, these bowels and mercies," shall they not lead you to fulfil His joy, who has bought you with His blood? If you must differ, act on your convictions, in truth, but in love. If you must be separate in some practices, be separate in love. Bear with those who cannot see with you, not only *tolerate* but *love* them. "Work your work betimes," but work in love. Acknowledge goodness wherever you find it, that you may love the goodness, and forgive the error. O let not the bitterness of party spirit blind your dying eyes to the necessity of entering the presence of the Holy One in love. So may the God of peace and love be with you all
AMEN.

ords
ssed
nful
pre-
hops,
ds of
nity?
pirit,
fulfil
must
. If
love.
derate
ork in
, that
O let
yes to
ne in
ou all